

## COMPOSTING IS YOUR FRIEND

Composting is an effective and natural way to turn yard trimmings such as grass clippings and leaves into a beneficial soil conditioner for your lawn and garden. Using compost in your lawn and garden replenishes essential nutrients in the soil without using commercial fertilizers that are potentially harmful to the environment.

## COMPOST HAPPENS....

Composting is a natural process that can help you save money and helps protect the environment. It takes a little effort to get started and it is well worth the time. Composting is something that you can do in your backyard with little difficulty as long as you follow these simple guidelines:

1. Pick-up a compost bin at no additional charge from the Montgomery County Division of Solid Waste Services.  
Visit [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/recycling](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/recycling) or call 240-777-6400 for locations and details.
2. Pick a location at your home that is level, easily accessible, near a water source and at least one foot away from any tree or fence on your property.
3. You can pick a sunny or shady spot, however it is important to know that a compost bin exposed to full sun requires a bit more monitoring.
4. Place a mixture of leaves and grass into your compost bin. If you add only leaves, it will take a longer time to make compost. A three-to-one mix of carbon to nitrogen materials (see list) works the best. Adding only grass will result in a strong odor when the grass decomposes, so make sure to add some carbon-rich materials like leaves when you add grass clippings.
5. When adding new materials to an existing compost pile, be sure to mix them in well.
6. Keep your mixture moist throughout the year, especially when first adding materials. The compost pile should not be completely soaked, but should feel more like a damp sponge. A dry pile will not compost, so leave a concave depression at the top of the pile to capture rainwater.
7. Turn your pile on occasion to aerate it, whether every week, every month or just once or twice a year.
8. Your compost can be used for top-dressing for your lawn or garden within 6 to 12 months. You will know when it's ready to use when it's dark brown-black, crumbly and sweet smelling.



For more information on composting and to find out where to get your compost bin, contact the Montgomery County Division of Solid Waste Services at 240-777-6400 or [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/recycling](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/recycling).

## COMPOSTING BUDDIES (do compost)

### Carbon-Rich (Brown) Materials

- Dry leaves
- Cardboard rolls
- Cotton rags
- Dryer and vacuum lint
- Sawdust
- Shredded newspaper
- Straw
- Wood chips

### Nitrogen-Rich (Green) Materials

- Plant trimmings
- Flowers
- Grass clippings
- Hay
- Nut shells

## COMPOSTING FOES (do not compost)

- Black walnut tree leaves or twigs
- Coal or charcoal ash
- Dairy products
- Diseased or insect-ridden plants
- Fats, grease, lard or oils
- Meats, fish, and bones
- Pet wastes

